cries of joy: "Abantu abengi baisa, bayaula kapundu, balakakasha, balasempula abati: mulenaisha, mulenaisha, muletemesha." If there is no success, silence reigns in the house. At dawn the nasenge (paternal aunt) comes to pick up the unhappy wife and takes her home. This means that the marriage is broken. The crowds who have gathered to celebrate disperse again. (Cases of impotent husbands are rather rare. On the other hand I have heard of cases where the husband was rendered impotent by drugs /miti/ which had been mixed in his food. I know of a verified case right here at Malolé.)

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Kuoa (the bath). Once the sexual act has been accomplished, the two spouses get up and at dawn they go to the river. The husband places himself upstream, the wife downstream, as they wash. After the bath they both return to their hut. They find that the hearth fire has been thrown out and that the center of the hut has been whitewashed. They will remain seated without fire.

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Lunweno (small vessel). The nasenge comes up holding a small earthenware lunweno in her hand. She lights a new fire near the foot of the bed /ntambalilo/, where she places three small ant nests /tumafwasa/ to hold up the small vessel. Together the three of them (aunt, husband and wife) pick up the small vessel full of water, holding it by the rim with two fingers, and place it on the fire. They wait until the water starts to boil. The aunt /nasenge/ then draws a little water by means of a very small ladle and pours some of it over the hands of both husband and wife.

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Kabwali (a small meal). Then the aunt, who has previously brought along some flour, prepared a small meal for the two. When the bwali is cooked, she takes a mouthful /lutoshi/ or a pellet and tosses one into the mouth of each. The spouses then may finish the bwali by themselves. Meanwhile the little vessel remains on the fire until the fire goes out. Before taking it off /ipula/, a present must be found for the aunt who has lent the vessel. The couple give her a chirundu, or mat. Then she takes back her vessel, replacing it by another, called the kanongo.

Kanongo or Kapalwilo. The aunt brings this new little vessel saying: "Eko muleumina ko," i.e., when the couple must /220/ have sexual intercourse, they take bow, arrows and hatchet out of the hut. Together they put water into the little vessel and repeat the preceding ceremony.

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Mwamba, the second greatest Bemba chief but one, who lives about ten miles from the white centre of Kasama, where his young men go to work. Here I also saw an *ukutema* rite, but only the old men participated. The boys looked derisively on while the chief made obeisance before his ancestors' shrines, and they only joined the subsequent tree-cutting reluctantly because they were interested by my presence and wanted to have the right to drink the beer provided for the workers on their return. These were youths who despised agriculture as a pursuit fit only for the old, and laughed at everything commonly known as 'the things of the past' (*ifintu fya kale.*) Their conduct distressed the old men exceedingly, and the comments passed with shrugs and in asides were instructive. They showed the complete association in the Bemba mind between the chief's political authority and his power of blessing. If Mwamba had been a 'great chief', the argument ran, he would have been able to control his men. That he was not showed that the spirits did not favour him and that the land had gone 'hard'. It was hardly likely that the royal garden would prosper, therefore, or, of course, the rest of the *icalo*. Elsewhere individuals still seemed to pray to the *imipashi* before tree-cutting, although some Roman Catholics have begun to cross themselves instead, or as well, but the integrating function of the chief's or headman's ceremony is evidently very much decreased.

(*b*) *Firing the gardens.* The firing of the piled branches, the next act of the economic year, is also ritualized, but the ceremonial is not public in any sense, either at the capital or in an ordinary village, and most commoners were unable to give me an account of what happened at the firing of the chief's gardens. In this instance they wait for the *mfumu's* signal to fire their gardens, but not for news of the ceremony performed then. The rite depends on the Bemba belief in the danger of contaminated fire, that is to say, fire that has been touched by any one ceremonially impure. If such fire is considered harmful to the life of a young child, or a chief, and a bar to any approach to the *imipashi*, it is not unnatural that the people should believe it necessary to light their branch piles with new fire, that is to say, made with fire-sticks or matches. A commoner whom I saw fire his gardens, brought matches, lit a torch of grass, spat into the air, and cried out, 'Now you fire burn well, and let us go in peace.'[1] A headman should purify himself

[1] *We mulilo ulepyafye cisuma! Tuende no mutende!*

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fire when it is first placed to the breast, or when the cord falls off (*ukumwalawila*). If its father is away and the ceremony of 'taking the child' cannot take place, the baby is given medicine (*umuti wa lueshya*). The mother and the midwife extinguish the old fire, mud the hut and light a new fire. Then they carry the baby to the men's shelter where there are presumably many youths 'with heat' or 'with bad things', or to a kitchen where the people have been known not to have done the purification ceremony. In this dangerous company, they give the baby gruel cooked on the new fire to make it immune. The rite of *ukumukokotola* is a ceremonial spitting of raw food on the baby by a menstruating woman so that the baby can be safely touched by a woman who is in this condition. All these methods are believed to secure immunity on homoeopathic principles.

The chief's sacred fire, the fire of the land, must be protected with even greater care. It is placed in a separate hut and watched by a senior wife, past child bearing. The chief's food is usually cooked by a man and not a woman.

To remove the dangers due to sex intercourse a special ceremony is required and this is one which can only be performed by a legally married couple. Hence the close links between the rules of ritual and those governing marriage ties, and the great importance of magic belief in determining the strength of the marital relationship. At marriage each girl is presented by her paternal aunt with a miniature pot about 2½ inches in diameter which must be guarded with the utmost secrecy. With this the purification rite is carried out. It is filled with water and placed on the fire, man and wife each holding the rim. Water from the pot is then poured by the wife on to her husband's hands, and some say on to the wife's as well. New 'pure' fire is then relit either by means of fire-sticks, or, as is usual nowadays, with matches. This apparently simple rite is the essential act which removes the condition of hotness from the body of man and wife and renders them free to touch a hearth with impunity or to approach the ancestral spirits. Some say that it used to be performed after each sex act and others that it was merely done before some ceremony of special undertaking such as harvesting. It is still spoken of with the utmost secrecy and shyness and still survives even in the face of strong opposition from

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833 783 missionaries. In the ritual life of a chief the pot ceremony is of particular importance.[1]

581 The ritual links uniting a married couple are thus particularly strong in this society. It is husband and wife who perpetually carry out the dangerous act of sex together, who thereby put themselves in each other's power, and who depend on each other for the ceremonial purification which neither can carry out alone.[2] The marriage relationship is ritualized from the start.

372 783 On important ritual occasions, such as the 'warming' of a new village site, the installation of a chief, a marriage, a death, or the protection rites for a young child, the old fire must be extinguished and a new fire lit with fire-sticks or matches, and the floor of the hut freshly mudded over. These are signs that the pollution is definitely removed. The fire is also harmed by objects or persons that are 'cold'. Contact with a dead body makes a fire cold, or [841] contact with a menstruating woman, who is described in polite speech as 'being in a state of coldness' (*Akuba na mpepo*) or as 'fearing fire' (*atina umulilo*). People who eat food cooked on the fire by such women are liable to illness.

841 372 The most constant danger to the family fire is in fact the touch of the housewife herself, when she is passing through her periods. Then she must be careful not to touch the family fire that her husband or her children use. She has her own small fire separate from the main fire, and if it goes out, she can only borrow from a woman past child-bearing or a girl who has not reached puberty. [833] Intercourse with her husband would be almost unthinkable for her during these days and there are heavy penalties attached to the showing of the menstrual blood by accident. A girl who allowed a drop of blood to fall on her husband's bed or who washed in the stream where others washed is thought to threaten illness to those near her. I was told she would be punished by her fellows by being made to sit over a fireplace till her flesh was scorched.

At the end of a period the old fire is extinguished; a ritual act of [784] intercourse takes place and a new fire lit (*ukusangulula*), the word used for the similar purification performed after a village has been polluted by death.

[1] Cf. my *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, 1939, p. 365.

[2] Only the head wife of a polygamist can perform the pot cermoney for him. Hence the legal and ritual difference in status between her and her co-wives.

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A murderer or a lion-killer can also harm a fire by being 'hot'. 783
They have done something fierce and must not eat cooked food 784
without purification. The clue to the solution of a murder case trial during my stay in the country was discovered by a Bemba detective who overheard the statement that on such and such a night, *X* and *Y* did not eat with the other men. 'They were eating their food cold'. In other words they had not yet been purified, and could not come near the common fire and hence could be presumed to be murderers.

It is difficult to exaggerate the strength of these beliefs, or the 372
extent to which they affect daily life. In a village at cooking-time 783
young children are sent here and there to fetch 'new fire' from neighbours who are ritually pure. Women in their periods call their sisters to cook for them. Young married women are seen sitting outside beer parties, and explain 'I have a young baby'. All the medicines have been taken and the protective rites done, but there is always the possibility that an adulterer might touch the fire when he is drunk and the beer might be polluted thereby.

There are other sources of danger. The first intercourse with a 833
girl after her initiation ceremony has been performed is considered 622
to be a perilous act. It is carried out with special ritual precautions and in the case of a chief, it must be undertaken by a special court official, (*kaulu*), who takes the risk on himself. This man must 'eat the chisungu' of the girl before she is taken to the chief. Yet, in spite of this danger, it is this act above all others which initiates the ritual relationship between husband and wife and it is valued on this account, so that a young man can claim damages if his [836]
betrothed has been seduced after her initiation ceremony, but before the marriage, for it is said that the chisungu of the girl has been stolen from him in this case.

One of the most fatal acts of all was for a girl to bear a child 848
before she had been initiated or before one of the more abbrevi- 777
ated rites now performed at puberty was carried out. Her child would then be a creature of ill-omen—*wa mputula*—who would bring misfortune on any village in which it lived. The child would be a portent of evil. It would stop rain falling. It would make the granaries empty quickly. It might bring dissension. The father and mother of such a child should therefore be driven out

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848 777 into the bush with their baby to save the community from danger.

783 372 753 The penalties which fall on those who come in contact with polluted fire are always envisaged as illnesses, mainly of the chest (*cifuba*) and such complaints are very common in Lubemba as we saw. It is important to notice too that the punishment falls on the innocent and not the guilty. The adulterous woman who touches her hearth-stone causes her husband to fall ill 'of the chest' if he accidentally comes near the fire. The father who is 'impure' through illicit intercourse 'kills his child with fire' (*ukumuipaya umulilo*) so that the baby starts to waste away and then to die.

581 768 783 The reader will have gathered that strong mystic links are thought to exist between husband and wife. Though marriage appears unstable in Lubemba compared with the unions contracted by some of the patrilineal Bantu in South Africa, yet the destinies of husband and wife are mysteriously joined. If one partner dies, the other must sleep with some social equivalent of the dead—a brother or uterine nephew or a maternal grandson in the case of a dead man, or a sister or granddaughter in the case of a dead woman. This is to 'take the death off' the living partner. A member of the dead man or woman's matrilineage has to fetch back his or her spirit from the living spouse and makes him or her free to remarry.

833 826 837 But this is only one example of the belief that the guardian spirit (*mupashi*) and the blood of man and woman mix in sex relationships. Women of loose morals in Northern Rhodesian towns are said to bear few children because they 'mix the blood' of Bemba and men of other tribes. Again, a man who sleeps with two women unites the three in a relationship that is magically perilous. The blood is mixed (*mulopa uasakanya*). If woman *A* commits adultery with *B* and the legitimate wife of *B* sees the blood of *A* from a scratch, a tattooed mark or during menstruation, then she, the guiltless partner, will die at once unless saved by the right medicine. So also if *X*, a man, sleeps with the wife of *Y*, and *Y* sees the blood of *X* by misadventure, then *Y*, the guiltless partner, will die.

833 837 691 For mother and daughter to sleep with the same man, albeit unknowingly, is a terrible thing. For an adulterer to pass the dead body of his mistress's husband, or any other man who has slept

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with her, is also a danger to all the men concerned. These triple relationships are constantly mentioned in court cases and are made the subject of claims by the injured family of a dead man or woman who declare that 'their child' has been killed in that way. They recur in narratives of the rather lurid sex lives of Bemba princesses who are expected to take many lovers, but must not bring trouble on the land by simultaneous relations of this kind.

Lastly, in common with many Bantu peoples, Bemba believe that, if a man commits adultery while his wife is pregnant, the baby is born dead. He has taken the spirit of the child (*asendo umupashi wa umwana*). If the woman is unfaithful while she is pregnant, then she herself dies in childbirth unless she confesses and gets medicine in time.[1]

I have dilated on this system of attitudes and beliefs because I think it fundamental to the understanding of Bemba puberty ritual and also because it cannot fail, I think, to strike the field-worker in this area as one of the basic elements of tribal dogma. It would be impossible to live long in a Bemba village without running constantly across instances of the effects of these beliefs whether in terms of ritual or in the most practical problems of cooking, catering and entertaining. If the Bemba can be said to have an ideological obsession in the sense that they are constantly pre-occupied with one set of fears, it is this belief in the magical potency of sex, fire and blood. Such emotional attitudes set us puzzling problems. In this chapter I shall confine myself to stating them. Later in the book I hope at least to suggest some hypotheses which may stimulate comparative research in other tribes holding similar beliefs.

To recapitulate, Bemba dogma stresses the role of the ancestors in determining human fortunes as well as the power of injured spirits, who revenge the injustices they suffered on earth on the

[1] It will be seen from the above that the causes of barrenness or death in childbirth are numerous among the Bemba. Barrenness may be due to the special curse of the father's sister; to an injured spirit returning to punish a descendant at random; to allowing the umbilical cord of a baby to fall to the ground; to adultery; or to witchcraft. Miscarriage is thought to be due to an injured spirit shaking the womb of the pregnant woman so that the baby falls out; when it occurs all the women of the matrilineage must be treated with medicine. Death in childbirth is due to the adultery of the mother herself.

562 often becomes imperious and managing and obviously enjoys her position as she sits on the verandah of a large hut, directing operations and dividing food. This is the position a woman achieves by a stable marriage, and one which she longs to achieve.

● 833 Sex relations are openly desired by Bemba and celibacy for men or women is not admired. A girl who rejects men is criticized as having 'pride of the womb' (*cilumba ca munda*). Abstinence is only practised for ritual reasons, by a woman nursing a child, for instance. Adultery in women was, however, savagely punished in 837 the old days and is a cause of divorce. It is still thought to cause death in childbirth. Men are not very seriously criticized for adultery although it is thought a terrible crime for them to 'kill' their children by not submitting to the purification rites.

462 The two sexes are divided in everyday life as regards their work 264 and recreations. Men sit in their own shelter at night and eat together there. Women, on the other hand, are grouped round their own house verandahs. Men have their own economic tasks and 593 women theirs. Girls do not enter marriage with any ideal of companionship with their husband. A young couple is not expected to show affection in public and a bridegroom tends to be despised for spending time with his wife. But affection grows over the years in the case of a stable marriage.

593 There are certain obvious contradictions in the husband's 562 position. Menfolk are dominant in Bemba society. Women used to [576] greet men kneeling, and they still do so on formal occasions today. Men receive the best of the food and take precedence at beer drinks and on other social occasions. They speak first in family matters. Men are expected to take the initiative in sex affairs. Women are married (*ukwupwa*—the passive form) while men marry (*ukwupa*—the active form). Girls are taught to please their husbands and are considered responsible for giving them pleasure in sex relations. Women calmly accept the fact that their husbands will beat them 'when they are young and their hearts get hot quickly'.

593 The contradiction between the masterful male and the sub- 562 missive son-in-law, between the secure young married woman backed by her own relatives and the submissive kneeling wife, is one which first struck me forcibly in the course of the chisungu

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teristic features of a particular social structure than in universal human attitudes. One characteristic feature of this sort is a system of reckoning descent through the matrilineal rather than the patrilineal line, which may give rise to conflict between the mother's brother and the father; or an emphasis on primogeniture, strong enough to provoke unconscious resentment in the younger sons of a family. Bateson and Gluckman have suggested that conflicts of this sort find in ritual an expression which they cannot secure in daily life.

Anthropologists tend to use such explanations in the case of ritual which cannot easily be interpreted in any other way, either because it is at variance with some other part of the same ceremony, or because it seems to fit poorly with the idiom of the tribe in question. 'Why do Zulu women dress up as men in a rite designed to produce rain?' asked Gluckman in a recent broadcast. Because (he announces) Zulu women react against the lowly status they have as wives in the kraals of their husband's relatives. They find compensation in ritual by aping the behaviour of men. In a 'rite of reversal' in which they assume men's clothes, herd cattle like men, and carry men's arms, they throw off their subjection and acquire the necessary feeling of confidence that they will be able to produce rain for the tribe.[1]

There are many incongruities in the chisungu. I have been quite unable to interpret some of them. There is a contradiction, to European ways of thinking, between the concentration of fears around the beginning of married life and the open pleasure in sex relations which Bemba express. Puberty is eagerly looked forward to by the girls. They and their parents watch the growth of their breasts with interest and excitement and openly discuss the approach of womanhood. Girls are enthusiastic about the prospect of marriage and are taught that sex relations are pleasant and that it is their duty to give pleasure to their husbands. They do not seem to fear the first act of intercourse or to apprehend that it will be painful. It will be recalled that a young bride reaches this stage very gradually since she is given to her husband many

[1] I have probably gone further than Gluckman intended in this sentence, and I have also made his treatment of ritual sound much more crude than it actually is by selecting only one aspect of his interpretations for mention.

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months before puberty and forms of partial intercourse are practised before she is fully grown. Yet, in spite of this, intercourse is thought to be dangerous. Moreover, it is the act within the marriage bond that is feared, not the act outside it.

The taboos surrounding marriage may be accounted for superficially in terms of Bemba belief, as I have already tried to show. Since it is through marriage that a man is able to get into touch with his ancestral spirits, the relationship is, for that reason, considered dangerous; dangerous because it is a source of power. Taboos of the Bemba type may exist in other tribes where access to ancestral spirits can only be made after an act of intercourse in legal wedlock followed by purification. Data on this point are not available from other areas at present.

It is difficult to believe that the Bemba associate guilt with sex in marriage, even though they speak of married couples as being hot, or with 'bad things on their bodies', if they have not been purified in the approved way. It is at least possible that sex is only considered shameful in association with a man's ancestors who are, in this society, his maternal uncles and grandfather. In daily life a Bemba behaves with reticence and shyness before his mother's brother since he may one day inherit the latter's wife together with his name, his status and his bow.[1] There may thus be an extension to the spirit world of attitudes to living relatives, which would explain the resolute attempt to keep a 'hot' person away from the spirit shrines.

The taboos may also reflect the anxieties associated with marriage in Bemba society, for it is, after all, a frail link on which to depend for an approach to supernatural power. Margaret Read has pointed out that among the Nyasaland Ngoni, who are patrilineal with strong patrilineages, and who practise marriage by bride-wealth, girls are protected before marriage and the ceremony involves a test of virginity. After marriage there are few, if any, taboos on handling fire. Among the neighbouring Cewa who are,

[1] It is possible that the castration complex takes a different form in matrilineal societies in which a young man succeeds to the role of his maternal uncle and not his father. The reluctance to associate sex with an approach to the ancestors may be connected with it. Malinowski made suggestions along these lines in 1927 in *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* but little serious comparative work has been done on these lines since then, so far as I know.

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624 'feed his people' and actually does so if they are in need, besides dispensing hospitality to strangers.

[778] The head of the village acts as its ritual head. In the old days, he put up one village shrine to his own ancestors and one or more others to the dead chiefs of the land. This is still done in out-of-

[782] the-way parts of the country and in most places, I think, prayers are offered to these tutelary deities, whether shrines are built to them or no. The headman, like the chief, also influences the life of

[833] the community through his own person. He must 'warm the bush' (*akakafye mpanga*) by an act of ritual intercourse with his

[785] wife before the huts of a new village are occupied. He blesses seeds for sowing, axes for tree-cutting, and first-fruits. His fire stands for the life of the community as a whole and must be ritually lighted when occasion demands. He presides over the

[787 788] special divination rites connected with village activities, such as the founding of a new community or the death of a member, and blesses new babies or individuals who are sick.

In the political hierarchy, the headman has his definite place. No Bemba may cultivate land except as a member of a village group, and the headman is responsible for organizing the supply of tribute and labour which must be paid to a chief by the community as a whole. He accompanies his villagers to court when they have cases to present and often speaks for them. He transmits the orders of a chief to his people and nowadays those of the Government.

[602] His prerogatives are few in number. As head of a kinship-group, he can command personal service from his younger relatives and should be able to exact one day's work from his people on the first day of tree-cutting and sowing. He is always given tribute of beer or meat. But probably, apart from these few economic privileges, the Bemba headman values most his position of authority, his small following, and the favour of his chief.

The sanctions for his authority nowadays are mainly his popularity, together with the strength of kinship feeling, and the belief of the Bemba that it is dangerous to allow an older relative to die

[787] injured. His supernatural powers were a source of strength in the old days, but to a very small extent now, and it must be admitted that the forces which keep a village together are not very strong. It is a constant fear to a headman that his people will melt away.

622 (*b*) *The Chief*. The functions of the different types of chief